Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Network Sector Workshops and Outreach Sessions

Forest Sector Workshop Summary

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Introduction

The Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Network (ESBN) is a multidisciplinary group of experts working to build the knowledge required to assist with the implementation of an Ecosystem Services (ES) approach in Alberta. ES are the benefits that humans receive from nature including provisioning (e.g. food, fuel, fibre, fresh water), regulating (e.g. air quality, climate regulation, erosion control, water quality), cultural (e.g. spiritual enrichment, recreation, aesthetic experiences) and supporting services (e.g. production of oxygen, soil formation).

Over the past several years many organizations, various levels of government, academia and industry have been exploring ways to integrate ES into planning and decision-making on working landscapes in Alberta. An important element of this approach is to identify current and future information needs. To meet these needs, solutions need to be developed that are practical, science-based, easy to understand and communicate.

In response, the ESBN developed a series of sector-based workshops to support the development of a recognized, comprehensive ES approach that can be adopted by governments, resource-based industries, landowners and land managers, and conservation organizations. The Forest Sector workshop brought together representatives from all major forest companies with current Forest Management Agreements in the province.

Principles for Sector Participant Engagement

The proposed program and process for participant engagement is based on the following principles:

1. Use sector focused workshops to ensure use of common language, understanding, knowledge, experience, regulatory frameworks and consistent approaches.
2. The involvement process will be designed to respect the requirements to address the project outcomes as well as to meet the needs of the participants in sharing their informed perspectives.
3. Participants will be provided the opportunity to be meaningfully engaged, increase and share their knowledge and feel that the event has been valuable to their learning.
4. The use of the results from the workshops will be clearly explained to participants.

The aim of the workshop was to bring together agriculture leaders to discuss and review the following core elements of the ESBN Roadmap:

1. Focus on five ESBN Roadmap building blocks.
2. Reference ecosystem attributes (Provisioning; Regulating; Cultural and Supporting Services).
3. Review and provide feedback on proposed approaches that have been developed to date.
4. Identify gaps, additional needs and opportunities to advance implementation of ecosystem services in support of regional land use plans.

Workshop Desired Outcomes

The workshop series was designed to help address the following outcomes:

1. Increase the awareness of the Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Network, the work sponsored to date and identification of areas for future research and collaboration.
2. Enhance the awareness and understanding of past and current landscape and watershed planning efforts and develop a clearer understanding of opportunities for collaboration on public and private land conservation initiatives.

3. Identify partners who can assist with the development of an expanded suite of ES tools.
4. Enhance the understanding of existing landscape planning and implementation programs currently delivered for the conservation and restoration of natural assets in targeted landscapes of Alberta.
5. Enhance the understanding of an integrated and operational ES market and the identification of gaps along with additional information and research needs.

Workshop Participant Discussion Summary

Assessment – Opportunities

- Show trade-offs between land cover types
- Partner with ongoing research to develop model
    - FRY, NRV, BULLTROUT etc
- Looking into certification process
    - FSC certifying ES provisioning maybe scaled?
- Improve planning standards and FMP standards
    - Stewardship standards
    - Data integration
    - Data standardization

Assessment – Gaps

- Temporal i.e. when does a cut block not be a cut block?
- Trends over time
- Why care about assessments? Why important without a market?
- Incentives to keep at or below targets
    - Not just disincentives
- Integrating fire management planning with water quality
- How integrate industry assessments into ESBN work?
- Develop more fine scale/detailed
    - i.e. caribou specific plans

Assessment – Recommendations

- Improve planning standard
- Review FMA based on stewardship performance
    - Careful not to add cost
- Link to certification programs
- Feedback mechanism to make the models an iterative process
- Have a clear understanding of what the baseline is and show trends over time
- Figure out how to monetize cultural, regulating and supporting values, and who would own or pay for them
- Introduce temporal outputs into assessment
- Understand baseline – today? Natural disturbance regime?

Assessment – Risks/Barriers

- Cost to industry
- Cost to GoA of obtaining data held by industry
- Scale/ resolution of data
- Coarser data is sometimes not relevant to FMA holders
- Time lag for data inputs
- Uncertainty - where is it leading to?
- Sharing private data

Data and Information Management – Opportunities

- Bioenergy development
    - Biomass inventory
    - Linked to federal/provincial incentives
    - Linked to carbon pricing
- Data as business
    - Data processing/rendering
- Increase technology or way the data is collected
    - i.e. drones, LIDAR etc
- Take existing data and build on with more detailed information

Data and Information Management – Gaps

- Spatial/temporal resolution
- Building yield curves
- Used BRIMS now not for public consultation, not business
- Need better and more refined data to inform business decisions
    - Requires new and more detailed information
    - i.e. ¼ section or smaller
- Other competing models to be included
    - FRY, BULLTROUT, SPADES etc
- Don't go down a 'rabbit – hole' with a specific model
- Develop inventory of existing models
    - How are we supporting existing models?
- How sustainable is the funding for data management?

Data and Information Management – Recommendations

- Total potential is not near as valuable as what is actually available
- Integrate temporal component such as harvest sequencing
- Integrate access and cycle times from townships to points where material would be delivered.

Data and Information Management – Risks and Barriers

- Fluctuations in natural gas and future energy cost playing a large role in profitability of bio-energy projects
- Data not having resolution required to make good decisions
- Funding model for updates may not be sustainable
- Being able to link activity and ES

    - How well can you link water quality to forest activity versus all other activity upstream from a point

Market Infrastructure and Enabling Policy – Opportunities

- Certification systems
    - SFI, CS, FSC etc.
- Diversity the industry
    - i.e. conservation values
        - could be both =’ve and –‘ve
- Could incent different certification opportunities
- Recreation offsets
    - trails, stream crossings etc
    - community outreach
    - value-added to certification
- Additional voluntary setbacks

Market Infrastructure and Enabling Policy – Gaps

- Set clear baselines and thresholds
    - With provincial government
- Tenure length is not equal to offset lengths
- Policy impacts changes with elected government changes
- Need to build institutional capacity
    - i.e. carbon markets rules changed, therefore all previous work was lost

Market Infrastructure and Enabling Policy – Recommendations

- Need to have organized groups to funnel money (i.e. CAPP)
- Keep analysis simple to calculate, administer, monitor
- Define ownership rights

Market Infrastructure and Enabling Policy – Risks and Barriers

- Property rights on public lands
- Competing land uses on public land makes it difficult to stack ES
- If an auction was to occur, the risk is that some groups would be outpriced out of the market
- Natural disturbances – who is liable?
- Foreign investment
- Multiple players with different price points (i.e. FMAs also have quota holders operating on the same landscape

Engagement and Outreach – Opportunities

- Build on existing processes i.e. FRI and others
- Demonstration project(s)
    - i.e. caribou with multiple allocations and competing interests
- Demonstrate the “Why”
    - Benefits to each stakeholder
- Document case studies from other jurisdictions
    - Real examples
- Assist in capacity-building with First Nations

    - Access to company data
- Sharing amongst multiple sectors

Engagement and Outreach – Gaps

- Not all ES are problems therefore no need to fix it
    - i.e. flood controls are normal processes so need to fix messaging
- lack of ES as a concept, therefore requires more public education
- Increase public knowledge of the systems
- Increase knowledge of ES and ESBN to provide leadership
- What does this mean for my business sector?
    - Is it an opportunity which gets things going
    - If it's a rule or legislation, then there is push-back
- Uncertainty leads to reduced engagement
- Can't wait for GoA, need to provide our own model

Engagement and Outreach – Recommendations

- Work with sectors
- Increase communications and engagement
- Develop pilots with examples
- Decrease the complexity of the topic i.e. ESBN, very complex and not easily understood
- Increase engagement with stakeholders
    - i.e. grazing operations and trappers
- Decrease the jargon and focus on what is being measured/managed
- Target messaging to target audiences
- Define ownership of resources
    - i.e. Public land
- Provide resources to groups/schools
    - link to corporate social license
- Promoting as a useful tool to potential users

Engagement and Outreach – Risks and Barriers

- Maintaining regular and consistent effort
    - Sustainability of ESBN effort
    - Not "flavour of the month"
    - Needs to be a benefit to long term planning
- Increase resource allocation to educate stakeholders
- Reduce complexity as it is generally complex topic
- Need to better understand how ES is portrayed
- "Is this a good thing for humans or is it because humans are bad?"
- Currently conflicting opportunities

Appendix A – Evaluation Summary

Workshop Objectives

1. I was able to identify gaps that may affect implementation of an ecosystem services approach to land and resource management
   Strongly agree = 2
   Agree = 5
   Neutral =
   Disagree =
   Strongly Disagree =
2. I was able to identify additional needs to advance implementation of ecosystem services
   Strongly agree = 2
   Agree = 4
   Neutral = 1
   Disagree =
   Strongly Disagree =
3. I had an opportunity to increase my awareness of the elements to implement Alberta's ecosystem services approach
   Strongly agree = 3
   Agree = 3
   Neutral = 1
   Disagree =
   Strongly Disagree =
4. I was able to learn about the 4 elements to implement Alberta's ecosystem services
   Strongly agree = 1
   Agree = 6
   Neutral =
   Disagree =
   Strongly Disagree =
5. Opportunities to continue to build on success to enable the elements to implement Alberta's ecosystem services were identified
   Strongly agree = 3
   Agree = 4
   Neutral =
   Disagree =
   Strongly Disagree =
6. Gaps that may affect support for delivering on the elements to implement Alberta's ecosystem services were identified
   Strongly agree = 2
   Agree = 5
   Neutral =
   Disagree =
   Strongly Disagree =
7. Realistic barriers to enabling the implementation of the elements to implement Alberta's ecosystem services were provided
   Strongly agree = 2
   Agree = 5

Neutral =
Disagree =
Strongly Disagree =

8. The Agenda accurately reflected the workshop process
   Strongly agree = 4
   Agree = 4
   Neutral =
   Disagree =
   Strongly Disagree =
9. The instructions during the workshop were clear
   Strongly agree = 4
   Agree = 2
   Neutral = 1
   Disagree =
   Strongly Disagree =
10. I had an opportunity to participate and contribute my ideas
    Strongly agree = 5
    Agree = 2
    Neutral =
    Disagree =
    Strongly Disagree =
11. Overall, the workshop met my expectations
    Strongly agree = 2
    Agree = 5
    Neutral =
    Disagree =
    Strongly Disagree =
12. Additional Comments and Feedback
    - Very interested in the mock-up/gaming scenario of a real world project